1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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their designation with a certain tolerant wisdom. Not so the present young generation in the farming community for whom education and material facilities have presented the chance of escape from a social inferiority complex.

The village was traditionally the community-group in rural Malta. Contact with the towns and Valletta was limited, especially for the villages of the west and in Gozo, until buses, press and rediffusion narrowed the gulf, but it was hardly less than the contacts between the villages themselves. The village was the group for most social interaction. Currently, the trend is towards a Malta-wide community-group in which villages are losing much of their isolation, although there is very little uniformity in this process. Sub-urban villages are clearly absorbing non-rural characteristics much more quickly than is the case in outlying parts of the Islands.

The nucleus of village life is the Church and the first citizen is the Parish Priest. The Priest combined teaching and general advisory duties with his spiritual role (see Chapter VI C). He was also the main link with the world outside the village through his relaying of general news from his pulpit. Normally, land transfers and a wide variety of matters connected with the agricultural cycle were announced by the Priest. The Church was the social meeting place and the basis of institutionalised activity. Even the village *festa*, that single day of wild exuberance, noise, fire-works, procession and carnivalesque has as its pretext a religious observance such as the honouring of the particular Saint of the village or the National Feast of the Shipwreck of St. Paul. In all this, the link between Priest and people was often further cemented by wide kinship connexions within the village. The son of an illiterate farmer might progress through Seminary and University to return to his home village as a priest and to be claimed as a relative by many members of that static and much inter-married community.

Such proximity, together with the very number of the priesthood in any parish made for a familiarity with the personnel of the Church just as confession, fasting, observance of Saints' and other special days, quite apart from the daily Mass, made for close acquaintance with its practice.

It is convenient to use the past tense in the foregoing only because the picture sketched has been modified in recent decades. It is however still the essential basis of communal life, especially in the rural community which, as suggested, holds to traditional custom longer than does the town. The modifications which have appeared are important in this present consideration because they lie behind the current social upheaval in which the individual countryman is being faced with a clash of new against old. If, as seems possible, he leaps to the new so completely as to relinquish the old entirely, then the traditional order of society will disappear along with the agricultural system on which it is based. This is the problem of the farmer in Maltese rural society.

An early non-religious movement was that of the Band Clubs; the first appeared in Rabat in 1860. But even these came to be identified with particular Churches and also with parish rivalries. The Band Club grew to become a major feature of social life in both town and country in Malta, although in Gozo it has had only a limited extension outside Victoria.

The Band Club is essentially a male organisation. Women have never been more than tolerated spectators and, to this extent, the movement reflects the place of women in Maltese society. Emancipation of women has spread into the countryside from the towns but even today women take an undemonstrative part in village activity and their movement outside the home is largely confined to Church-going, shopping and possibly field-work. The modern young woman who has had at least eight years schooling seeks paid employment beyond the house and fields. In rural circles the tendency is still to frown mightily at such a suggestion but it can only be a matter of a few years before what is now accepted in Valletta becomes tolerated in rural Gozo.

Functional diversification has been the keynote of twentieth century village society in the Maltese Islands. There is no evidence to show that there is any challenge to the position of the Parish Priest in matters religious (the situation has been less satisfactory from the point of view of the Church in urban Malta)

5: Cremona B-3, 4 (no date) 1923
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The belief still lingers that the
764 lamp must remain lighted for forty days, during which the soul
765 of the departed remains above the flame.

764 (g) Some families give the poor bread. The love-feasts of
735 the primitive Christians were in mediaeval times replaced in
171 both Malta and Sicily by the distribution of cakes and of boiled wheat mixed with sesame. Distributions of meat and bread to the poor came also to be a custom at some *festas*, but were continued in Sicily mainly by the giving of beans and bread on All Souls' Day.[1] In Malta on that day, however, the old custom has been replaced by the free kitchens or the "Potage for the Poor" (*Borma tal-Fqâr*).

765 Mourning customs in Malta have during the last century
178 passed through wide changes and, as in other European coun-
[177] tries, have reverted to a more simple type. Some are purely
[192] mediaeval, and are influenced by the prolonged intercourse with Sicily and Italy during the rule of the Grand Masters. The vernacular term for mourning is *vistu*, corresponding to the Sicilian *visitusu* ("to be in mourning").

765 The wearing of special mourning clothes was general in the
292 fourteenth century, but became less marked by the year 1700.
178 Women used to wear woollen trailing skirts and dark shawls
184 over their heads. Some better-class people wore one black transparent veil over the head and another veil of black silk taffeta over the gown, reaching to the waist. A sort of Majorca woollen cloth is prescribed for mourning wear to the heirs under a will of A.D. 1543. The Grand Master's suite wore a special garment called *Scoto*, of thin light serge. Although it is nowadays customary with some families to put on as little mourning as possible and to shorten its period, a full mourning dress is worn by others for two full years after the death of parents. The simplest style of mourning, a black necktie and a crape arm band, is in general use after the death of a distant relative.

765 Family mourning is generally observed as follows:—
178 I. Closure of business premises, a mourning notice being affixed to the door.

[562] II. Women keep indoors for a few weeks, only going out in

[1] G. Pitrè, *Spettacoli e Feste Popolari*, vol. xii. p. 407.

5: Cremona B-3, 4 (no date) 1923
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the early morning to hear mass. In old times such seclusion was much more strictly observed, and the period was never less than forty days. For men this sort of mourning did not exceed seven days, and is now generally limited to three days, after the funeral.

III. Old custom prohibited cooking for three days, and the family of the deceased was provided with meals by friends or distant relatives. This rule was, and perhaps is still, followed in some districts of Sicily and amongst Arab tribes of Northern Africa. While meals were being served the bereaved family sat with folded legs on the floor, which was covered with a straw mat. The historian Ciantar relates in 1772 that these mourning dinners still took place in his early days. This custom has now been discontinued, and our village people merely abstain from having their pastry and other food prepared in a public oven for a period of some months after the death of a member of the family.

IV. Men often do not shave for a fortnight or even a month. This practice was more in favour in old times. Middle and lower class people keep away from *festas*, and the higher class from theatres, dancing, and merrymakings.

V. People of rank wear a mourning dress for a few days following a death in their family, but country people are satisfied with wearing a black felt hat and a dark sash round the waist. Women, if wives or brides, follow the continental style of full mourning dress in crape. Some women do not wear a hat or bonnet during the first week of mourning, and go out in *faldettas*, a national head-covering which is more commonly used when attending religious services. Since the seventeenth century the Maltese *faldetta* has undergone some changes in shape and material. The old *faldetta*, as described by Ciantar, was a black veil or cowl covering the head and reaching to the heels, like the Arab and Sicilian women's trailing mantles. Apparently countrywomen wore a blue linen veil, which is still adopted, for economy's sake, in some of the eastern seaside hamlets of the island, but amongst the lower class in general the black hood, which matrons changed into silk with lace edges, was more common. Bombazine (without lace) or silk *faldettas* are now

241 423 rapidly than does the full-time farmer who often seems to continue working unpracticable fields, which, by present standards, are uneconomic. He continues to work them for reasons which are a mixture of sentimental attachment, force of habit and, quite often, stark ignorance of the fact that the plots concerned are bringing him loss rather than profit. He does not indulge in cost-accounting.

241 464 433 This is the background to the present attempts to rescue Maltese farming from its two main difficulties:

(a) a drastic reduction in the agricultural labour force due to the retreat from the land, especially by the younger generation,

[654] (b) the fact that contemporary Maltese farming cannot produce a profit without subsidies and protection from foreign competition.

654 241 464 The answer to the labour problem is held to be mechanization, along with the education of the farmer in the use of better suited methods, crops, animals, etc., and maximum development of the land by means of low-interest Government loans to farmers. The accepted answer to (b) is in fact not an answer at all but entails the creation of an artificial farming economy in which Government subsidies and guaranteed markets enable the farmer to make some profit where he would otherwise sustain a heavy loss. The cost of this is the price which the Government is willing to pay in order to develop the Islands' only primary industry to the maximum and to encourage the farming community to remain on their farms.

The limited scope of these solutions emerges from the discussions of labour, mechanization and protective subsidies and guarantees which follow.

LABOUR

178 462 [592] The decline of the peasant system in Malta and its replacement by what has been called commercial farming has been accompanied by changes in the family as the operating group within the farm. There has been no strictly formal division of labour by sex in Malta[20] but there is an 'accepted' division and this is important to an understanding of the present socio-economic upheaval in Maltese rural society.

562 462 178 In traditional and peasant Malta woman's place was certainly in the home. An old adage held that "Women should never appear but twice in public: the day they are married and when they are buried" (R/326, Vol. 1, p.80). Even today the countrywoman, especially in Gozo, still divides her activity between home, Church, and the fields worked by the

462 family, while her daughter, literate, emancipated and
562 'progressive' by contrast, wants to take up paid employment
178 outside the home or even outside the village and insists on a greater measure of social intercourse than would have been proper for her mother.

462 The home and the care of the children remains the sphere
178 of women and girls. The menfolk took part in such work only in exceptional cases, such as illness. Nowadays the men are often more inclined to interest themselves in this side of family life but, as often in a discussion of this nature, the range of divergence of practice defeats generalization.

178 Until recently it was customary for most women and girls
462 to work, unpaid, alongside their menfolk in the fields,
288 especially when work was pressing as at harvest time.
464 Furthermore cotton was the work of women in most stages of its preparation (Section 1), while lace was almost entirely the work of women - particularly those whose age or infirmity excluded them from field work. Cotton is now of minor importance and lace-working is confined to the older
178 generations. The employment vacuum thus created is now
464 partly being filled by young women and girls seeking employment away from the family in clerical jobs, retailing, teaching and domestic service. Fewer work as hired farm-labourers than was the case a generation ago. Yet there remains an increasing number of unmarried girls today, educated far beyond field work, who cannot find employment to suit their aspirations or qualifications, whether because of the scarcity of suitable posts or on account of the attitude that persists in labelling paid employment fo a girl as somehow improper (Case I). Married women are, in any case, discouraged from taking or retaining paid employment throughout Malta (B/598).

241 Some farming families still retain the traditional
462 pattern of field work by the whole family (Case XI);
[178] others do not (Case VIII). In some cases the women and girls work occasionally with their menfolk (Case II). In the fields they are given hoeing, planting, reaping and picking jobs but heavier work and jobs considered skilled, such as spraying with insecticide, are left to the men (v. Case I on the division of family labour).

241 In general it appears that as the younger age-groups
592 are educated and emancipated unpaid field work is avoided.
[178] The only remuneration noted was limited to small 'pocket-
[465] money' donations and even these went to sons working full-time with their fathers (Cases X, XI) and not to daughters. Here then is the problem. The farmer is faced

178 241 234 512 milk production (notably the growth in the number of dairy cattle in the Islands) has produced a new kind of operator in Malta, the cows' milk producer, for whom field work is secondary and then based primarily on the production of fodder for his animals and fruit and vegetables for the family.

512 527 796 [241] [234] [178] [575] [461] Sundays and Feast Days bring a break in the routine. Work in the fields lapses but animals still have to be milked and fed. On festa days the whole village goes en fête and to Church. A procession of religious images, members of religious orders, priests, penitents and others to the accompaniment of fireworks and brass bands blaring through the bustle in the narrow streets and alleys fills the evenings of these not infrequent days of festa, fast and feast. These Holy Days and holidays have been the traditional breaks in the round of hard and heavy working days. The present younger generation still enjoys the merriment and processing of these occasions but the Band Clubs have lost for them something of their position of fifty years ago, and the cinema and bright lights of Valletta provide alternatives and additions to the range of possibilities. The young villager of today wants time off not only on festa days but on ordinary working days as well.

527 796 562 575 517 The village festa is a communal celebration. Both men and women can share in the religious and social aspects. The Band Clubs established in the most villages during the past hundred years have however been solidly masculine (B/521). Other recreations of the farming community are largely masculine pastimes such as shooting small birds, gossipping in the village squares and bars or at the M.M.U. collection depôt, watching the races at the Marsa course or arguing prices at the Sunday morning market 'Fuq il-Monti' in Valletta.

517 443 [184] [494] In Gozo the big assembly early each Sunday morning in 'It-Tokk', the main square of Victoria, is the scene of much buying, selling and talking by villagers from all parts of the Island who come each week to the capital but rarely visit other villages. The focal pattern resembles that in Malta, where the bus routes converge on the Urban area and Valletta but provide comparatively little inter-village transport (B/381).

178 241 Dissatisfaction with the way of life outlined above, whether for economic reasons (the small remuneration per man/hour of effort), or social considerations (the low status of the farmer, fisherman and other country people) is producing a younger generation anxious to escape if at all possible from following in the footsteps of their fathers and, thereby, accentuating the problem of how the farms of Malta and Gozo are to continue operating.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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his object, and on the standard being taken to be returned to the Grand Master, the cloth covered globe burst open and out came a flight of pigeons. 527 526 175

The Maltese never allowed either foreigners or soldiers to share the profits of the *cuccanja*.

This entertainment which has been suppressed since the reign of the Grand Master De Rohan (1775-1797) was a a source of great delight to the Maltese people. [656]

BOWLS

A game of bowls is a favourite pastime in Malta. 562

The players arrange themselves in sides of three or four each, and each man is usually provided with three bowls, which he marks differently for distinction.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

443 St. Anna, which are celebrated on the 527 24th, 25th, and 26th of July. These [796] fairs, however, which were once very [178] popular, have now sunk into insignificance and most likely will before long entirely disappear.

443 Fairs have long been regularly held 171 in most parts of Europe and Asia, and they appear to have originated in the Church festivals, which were found to afford convenient opportunities for commercial transactions. The concourse of people being then so such greater than on other occasions.

USAGES

195 The ancient Maltese formerly kept • 562 their wives in the strictest retirement. They held the opinion that women should never appear but twice in public,

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the day they were married and when they were buried. They were therefore always employed within doors, and never went out, except at a very early hour to church, when they were entirely covered by a long mantle. This costume came originally from Sicily, and reached from the head to the feet, the forehead and eyes alone being visible. The upper part of the mantle, covering the head, was cut in a different manner for unmarried women—these wearing it shaped round, while married women wore it pointed.

WEDDINGS

Marriages in Malta were always entirely arranged by the parents; who for the greater part consulted only their own interest, and the suitable-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

787 585 533 in a rage, and he could not be persuaded to go back to his wedding before the organist could be found and the organ played for the occasion.

PAYING VISITS

273 594 576 825 If a person goes to pay a visit, for the first time, to a party and is not treated with a sort of drink called *zambur* — made of aniseed—a mouse enters the chest of drawers and gnaws all the petticoats of the mistress of the house.

SENDING TO THE OVEN

252 562 Some people think it a great shame for a woman who sends dishes to be cooked in an oven when her husband is away from the Island.

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

although the Maltese form was probably dictated by the need to cover the head when entering a church. Its one drawback is that it takes up a lot of space, more space, unfortunately, than is available in the motor-bus, modern Malta's form of land transport. Let it be hoped that it will survive these disabilities, for it is not only unique but also an asset if those of the younger generation who have abandoned it in favour of the banal dress of everywhere else would only realize the fact, enhancing beauty while discreetly veiling any imperfections. These young ladies should ponder the words of Monsieur André Maurois in his little sketch of Malta:

> When its wearer moves, the *faldetta* is filled with air, and the Maltese girls, tripping in twos and threes along the streets, look like flotillas of graceful barques with black sails, blown along their course by the wind of destiny.

Oddly enough another French visitor and Academician anticipated by just a century, and in almost the same terms, Monsieur Maurois's charming flight, or perhaps echo, of fancy. Monsieur de Lamartine, visiting Malta with his English wife in 1832, describes the *ghonnella* as

> a half-cloak of black silk . . . of a light texture caught by a breeze, suggesting the sail of a skiff whose capricious folds alternately conceal and reveal the mysterious figure of the wearer, which seems able to escape at will from its embrace.

In the Malta of an earlier age, when the lives of Maltese women and girls were closely circumscribed, the *ghonnella* was not the only aid to their seclusion. Those who wander about the country districts will notice here and there that the older farmhouses have no windows giving on to the street; the Maltese countrywoman, like her Spanish sister, had to turn her face inward, not outward. But what the houses had, and some still retain, were stone brackets on the outer wall, made to hold the pots of sweet basil which showed that

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

562 342 584 824 291 a marriageable daughter lived within. One pot of basil to each marriageable girl. So the potential swain could tell at a glance whereabouts to loiter for a discreet preview and what address, should he be interested, to give to the marriage-broker.

[pp 31–55 of Text not processed. Plates facing pp. 40, 41, 48 and 49 have been processed].